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THE PROGRESS OF BUDDHIST RESEARCH;

WITH SOMETHING ABOUT PENTECOST.

Since the writing of my note on the "Buddhist-Christian Missing Link" in the fall of 1911 (*Open Court*, Chicago, and *Maha Bodhi Journal*, Colombo, both for January, 1912), great events have happened in the field of Buddhist learning. We are now hot on the trail of the Missing Link, if we have not yet found it. For, besides the selected documents, to be presently described, there are thousands more reposing in the libraries of Peking, London, Paris and Berlin, which we know to contain many more canonical Sūtras translated into Sogdian,¹ and there are doubtless more forthcoming in Bactrian also.²

In a book published in 1908, I said this:

"Menander, in the second century before Christ, showed an interest in, and a knowledge of, the Buddhist scriptures which may have been founded upon a knowledge of Pāli; but even then one would expect such a patron to have some specimens of the lore he admired translated into Greek, or into some vernacular. Strabo says that nearly the same language pervaded Media and parts of Persia, Bactria and Sogdiana. Strabo also says that the Corybantes had come from Bactria, and Euripides pictures them as passing the Bactrian Gates. When Buddhist ideas were carried westward, they would as surely be translated as the Bacchic had been."

These words were written not later than 1907, and since then my prediction has been abundantly verified. We have actually found fragments in Chinese Turkestan of Buddhist scriptures both in Bactrian and Sogdian, the latter coming from a Chinese library that was closed up in 1035, while documents from a near-by tower were dated A.D. 1 and A.D. 20!³ Bactrian or Tokharish was the language of ancient Tukhāra, i. e., northern Afghanistan and parts of Chinese Turkestan. Sogdian was spoken in Russian Turkestan, where the city of Samarkand had been the center of a Greek civilization since the time of Alexander.

In Tokharish we have found Pācittiya 92 of the Vinaya, in the recension of the Sarvāstivādins, thus confirming the words of Yuan

¹ M. Aurel Stein, *Ruins of Desert Cathay*. London, 1912, Vol. II, p. 213.

² Sylvain Lévi, in *Le Temps*, Paris, May 19, 1911. Reprinted in the *Revue Archéologique*.

³ Stein, *Ruins of Desert Cathay*. Among these documents, though undated, are some Sogdian epistles in Aramaic letters, now being read by Gauthiot.

Chwang, who said that all Tukhāra was Sarvāstivādin. In Sogdian we have found the Vessantara Jātaka, that great favorite about the Bodhisat prince who gave all he had away.⁴ It was this very Jātaka that was graven upon the Great Tope at Anurādhapura, when visitors from Alexandria came to see the opening ceremonies, in the second century before Christ.

Other portions of scripture—the Nidāna and Dasabala Sūtras, the Dharmapada—and a patristic hymn, have been found in Sanskrit;⁵ while fragments of patristics have also turned up in Eastern Turkish, written in characters of Syrian origin, side by side with a Christian legend about the Wise Men from the East in the Gospel of Matthew!⁶

All this means that in the early centuries of the Christian era the religion of the Buddha was actively at work in languages spoken by the Medes and Parthians who were present at Jerusalem in the thirties of the first century (Acts ii. 9): "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Judea and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia." It is to be noted that *Judea*, in this verse, is tautological, for the scene narrated is laid in Judea. As foreign countries are being represented, we must probably read *India*, though Dean Alford defends our present text on geographical grounds. Now the New Testament writer who tells us this is Luke, the Antioch physician, the author of a Gospel whose aim was to take Christianity outside the narrow pale of Judaism and put it into line with the Gentile religions. It is Luke alone who has the story of the Penitent Thief, corresponding to the Angulimālo of the Sūtras.⁷ And in order to introduce this story into the Gospel, Luke is compelled to violate the text of his master Mark, who says that both the malefactors reviled the Lord. A scholar of the English church, in a recent number of the *Hibbert Journal*, has shown that Luke was utterly unscrupulous in literary matters, and again and again did violence to his sources to carry out his aims. I have suggested, both in my Tokyo edition (1905) and in my Philadelphia edition (1908) that Luke did violence to the text of Mark on purpose to introduce these Buddhist legends wherewith he was familiar.

It is true that our present Bactrian and Sogdian manuscripts

⁴ Gauthiot, in the *Paris Journal Asiatique*, January-February, 1912.

⁵ *Journal Asiatique*, Nov.,-Dec., 1910.

⁶ *Abhandlungen* of the Royal Academy of Berlin, 1908 and 1911: article "Uigurica," by F. W. K. Müller.

⁷ Middling Collection, No. 86, in the Pāli; but in the Numerical Collection in Chinese.

are probably to be dated between the third century and the eighth. But this is in Chinese Turkestan, whither their archetypes had been brought from regions to the westward. We know, from coins and from Buddhist history, that the religion was flourishing in Bactria both at and before the time of Christ; and the inference is irresistible that, when the missionaries began their Chinese translations in the sixties of the first century, they had already acquired experience as translators in the tongues of the Parthian empire. The only difference is, that the well-established civilization of China, and the continuance of Buddhism therein, have preserved and dated the Chinese versions, whereas the extinction of Buddhism by Islam in Afghanistan and elsewhere has destroyed those older ones.

What we have actually found of them is due to Chinese care, in Chinese dominions; but we are entitled to infer a whole lost literature in Bactrian, Sogdian AND GREEK,* which was the vehicle of Buddhist propaganda in the days of the Christian Evangelists.

We do not need to wait until a Greek Sūtra is dug up in Afghanistan, as I have hitherto anticipated. We now have actually in our hands a series of Buddhist documents translated by missionaries into languages that were understood by the very people whom Luke records as present at a feast which his authorities had witnessed. Could we but find, in these languages, the Buddhist Angelic Heralds and their Hymn, as recorded in the Sutta-Nipāto; the Lord's Three Temptations, viz., to transmute matter, to assume temporal power and to commit suicide, as recorded in the Classified and Long Collections; the Penitent Brigand aforesaid; and the Charge to the Sixty-one Missionaries, so like Luke's Charge to the Seventy, we should have in our hands the key to the riddle which Max Müller said he had spent his life in trying to solve; viz., the indebtedness of our proud religion of humility and peace, which has been spread over the planet by the swords of Europeans, to the meek and lowly cult of our brown brethren across the sea—that cult which, alone among the faiths of mankind, has never dipped its hands in the blood of animals or men.

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* "There is little doubt that in Bactria, Buddhist literature was actually translated into Greek." (*Buddhist and Christian Gospels*, 4th ed., Philadelphia, 1908-1909. Vol. I (1908), p. 154). See also my remarks on "that lost version of the Sūtras which traveled westward." (*Buddhist Texts in John*, 1906, pp. 26-28.